

## Jesus' instructions to his disciples

Text: Mark 6:7-13 for 07/15/2018 by Pastor Bolwerk

*<sup>7</sup> Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. <sup>8</sup> These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. <sup>9</sup> Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. <sup>10</sup> Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. <sup>11</sup> And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them." <sup>12</sup> They went out and preached that people should repent. <sup>13</sup> They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*

Instructions: Sometimes you need to follow them exactly, and sometimes you don't. Sometimes it is okay to not follow instructions step-by-step. Other times it can be dangerous, and even deadly, to not follow instructions exactly. For example: I don't think any adults here today would need to follow written instructions on how to change a light bulb, or how to make ice cubes. But what if you were asked to install a natural gas line to your stove, or to assemble a piece of medical equipment that would be used to keep someone alive? In those cases, we would want to have the instructions and follow them to the letter because we know if things are not put together properly the results could be deadly.

As we study these words from the Gospel of Mark we find the disciples receiving instructions that are critically important. These instructions are more than just a matter of life and death, they are a matter of eternal life and eternal death. And these instructions are not just for the disciples who sat at Jesus' feet, they are for all Christ's believers. As God speaks to us through the Gospel writer Mark we hear ...

Theme: Jesus' instructions to his disciples:

- I. Trust him.
- II. Testify about him.

Jesus is instructing his disciples before sending them out into the world to serve him. Mark writes, **Calling the Twelve to him, [...] These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic"** (vs. 7a,8,9). Jesus tells his disciples to take no bread, and no money to buy bread. Christ wants them to trust that he is going to provide for their physical needs. Yet even though Jesus is providing for those needs he does give his disciples the ability and freedom to provide some things for themselves. He tells them to bring a staff. Jesus does not give them a staff, nor does he tell them how long it should be, or what it should look like. The disciples are to determine those things. Our Lord tells them to wear sandals and to only wear one tunic, yet he does not spell out which sandals or what kind of tunic they should wear. When it came having what was needed for carrying out the work (staff, sandals, tunic), Christ expected his followers to use their God given knowledge and reason to figure out what was best, and then let him take care of the rest. And the disciples did that. They trusted Jesus to take care of the things he said he would.

You and I are also disciples of Jesus. The word disciple means "student," or "one who learns." Are we learning and applying Jesus' instruction to ourselves? Think about your life and your day to day activities. Do you see yourself trusting Jesus to provide what you need for your body and life? Or do you see yourself taking more than you need? Do you have one "tunic", that is, do you have enough clothing to take care of your basic needs? Or is your closet full of extra "tunics"; is your closet full of things you really don't need? Do we trust Jesus to provide our daily bread, or are our cupboards and refrigerator overflowing with so much food that we have to throw it away because it keeps going bad? And how many of us own more than one T.V.? How many T.V.s can you realistically watch at one time? Do we trust Jesus to provide for our needs, or do we feel that we have to go out and get what we want for ourselves? Do we find ourselves taking advantage of our Lord's generosity? When people are generous to us, we thank them, but do we thank God for what he has provided to us through them? Or what about when God abundantly blesses us with material

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wealth, do we in turn thank him by generously providing for his work here in this world? Too often we allow our selfishness to replace trust in our gracious Savior.

So, Jesus instructs us. Like any good teacher Jesus works to supply what we are lacking: trust. Jesus knows where the problem lies. He says, **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me”** (John 14:1). Our Lord wants us to recognize that this life is not about how much stuff you can drag with you on the journey. Life is not about what you're going to wear or the things that you have. Life is about where you're going to end up. Jesus provides what is necessary for both the journey and the destination. Our Lord gives us something we could never provide for ourselves: He offers us the perfection we need to get into heaven. Jesus perfect life included perfectly trusting his Father's plan of salvation, even though God's plan included Jesus dying for our sins. Fully trusting God's plan, Jesus took our sinful lack of trust to the cross. There he faced the rejection of his own Father so that we would never have to face the pain of that eternal rejection. Yet even after everything Christ suffered at the hands of his Father, Jesus displays for us a trust that is almost unimaginable. As our Savior was about to die - **Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”** (Luke 23:46). Now that is trust. Even after God rejected his own Son because of our sin; even after being alienated from his Father and being made to suffer our hell, Jesus was still willing to entrust his holy, precious soul into the hands of his heavenly Father.

Just as Christ trusts his Father, so he wants you and I to trust him also. But our Lord doesn't just say, “Trust God,” and then expect us to make that happen on our own. Jesus gives you the power to trust him and his Father. Jesus gives you that faith by instructing you through his word. His first instruction to you is to trust him.

Why do some people in this world work so hard to gain your trust? Have you ever noticed that the more someone wants you to trust them the more likely it is that the person is trying to sell you something? Businesses, and business people, are always working to build trust because they know that when people trust them they can get some of the best advertising around: Customer testimonials. When people feel that a company and its products have been helpful in fulfilling their needs those people are more willing to talk about that company to others. The more people speak positively about a company the more likely it is that others will come to trust that company. When Jesus calls you with his gospel, his gospel does more than just help you, it saves you. It not only saves you, but the gospel also creates in you the ability to trust Jesus. As our Lord instructs his disciples we hear in his words an opportunity because Jesus instruction to his disciples are to testify about him. That is what our Lord is sending them out to do.

Jesus wants his disciples to turn people away from their sin and turn them back to the God who saves. So Jesus instructs his disciples to testify about him with their words. Mark writes, **“They went out and preached that people should repent”** (v. 12). Notice that the disciples did not just use their words to condemn people. They used their words to lead people to repentance. They used their words to connect people to Jesus. And along with their words, they also testified with their actions. **They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them** (v. 13). Those whom Jesus sent out displayed the compassion of Christ in their lives: They were driving out demons and healing the sick. Jesus gave them the authority to do these things, so they could back up their message with God's power. But their actions did something else: their actions gave them the opportunity to proclaim that good news to even more people.

Christ instructs us to testify about him. Yet we often feel inadequate to speak about him. We might think we don't have the right skills or abilities to talk about Jesus. We look at Jesus' apostles and think, “I can't drive out demons or heal sick people,” or “I can't preach like Paul”, or “I just can't go up to people and start talking about Jesus.” But sharing Jesus is not about what you cannot do. It's about what you can do. It is about the abilities Christ has given you to use for him. Think of all the wonderful abilities Jesus has given you: The ability to speak; a sense of humor; creativity; skills for building, or singing, or writing, or sharing. Use those abilities to let others know about your

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Savior.

But maybe it's not our abilities that make us hesitant to share Jesus. Maybe it's our words. It's easy to think, "I'm not good with words," or "I struggle to come up with the right things to say." If these are things you wrestle with, then ask yourself this: Whose words are you using? If you are trying to use your own words and ideas to lead others to Jesus, then you may very well struggle with what to say and how to say it. That is why God wants you to use *his* words to testify about him. Jesus said about the Bible: "**These are the Scriptures that testify about me**" (John 5:39). The Bible tells us that faith comes from hearing the message of the gospel. And it's also through the scriptures that the Holy Spirit does his work of bringing people to faith. So, what does all this mean? It means that as Jesus' disciples, as student of Christ, we want to learn and use his words. We want to read, study, and take to heart all the Bible teaches. You will find that the more of God's Word you know the easier it is to testify about your Savior. Use scripture to testify about Christ. That is where his power is.

And remember, as we testify about our Lord, Jesus gives us his authority to testify about him. That authority is the authority of God himself. After Jesus rose from the dead, he said to his disciples, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me**" (Matthew 28:28). We do not speak by our own authority; instead we point people to the One who gave us the authority to speak his truth. Jesus, who is true God, gives us his authority to go out and testify to the truth that he is the Savior of the world. As our Lord has instructed us, let us go out and testify about him.

Following instructions: Sometimes it's not that important to follow them; other times following them can be a matter of life or death. Following our Lord's instructions is critically important for our spiritual and eternal life. Follow Jesus' instructions. Trust him as he cares for your life here and prepares a place for you in the life to come. And testify about Christ. Testify to the truth of God's saving and forgiving love which he has given to you through faith in his Son, Jesus. Amen.